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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/804,474	03/13/2001	Gennady V. Merkulov	CL000891	8769

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CELERA GENOMICS CORP.
ATTN: WAYNE MONTGOMERY, VICE PRES, INTEL PROPERTY
45 WEST GUDE DRIVE
C2-4#20
ROCKVILLE, MD 20850

EXAMINER

CHERNYSHEV, OLGA N

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1646

DATE MAILED: 10/06/2003

13

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/804,474

Applicant(s)

MERKULOV ET AL.

Examiner

Olga N. Chernyshev

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 06 August 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-4,6-9,12-21 and 24-29 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 1-3,7 and 12-21 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 4, 6, 8, 9, 24-29 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 13 March 2001 is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on _____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 9.
- ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____
- ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- ☐ Other:

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DETAILED ACTION

Status of the claims

1. Claims 5, 10-11, 22-23 have been cancelled, claims 4, 9, 13 have been amended and claims 24-29 have been added as requested in the amendment of Paper No. 12. Claims 1-4, 6-9, 12-21 and 24-29 are pending in the instant application.

Election/Restrictions

2. Applicant's election with traverse of Group III in Paper No. 12 is acknowledged. The traversal is on the ground(s) that examination of claim 13, directed to a method for detecting the presence of a nucleic acid molecule which encodes a protein of SEQ ID NO: 2 would not unduly burden the Examiner. This is not found persuasive because an application may properly be required to be restricted to one of two or more claimed inventions if they are able to support separate patents and they are either independent (MPEP § 806.04 - § 806.04 (j)) or distinct (MPEP § 806.05 - § 806.05 (i)). The Examiner has shown that the Groups III and VI are independent or distinct for the reasons in the previous Office action (see Paper No. 10). Furthermore, MPEP § 803 provides that the separate classification (i.e., class and subclass) of distinct inventions is sufficient to establish a *prima facie* case that the search and examination of the plural inventions would impose a serious burden upon the Examiner; such separate classification was set forth in the Office action mailed May 06, 2003 (Paper No. 10).

The requirement is still deemed proper and is therefore made FINAL.

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Claims 1-3, 7, 12-21 are withdrawn from further consideration pursuant to 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a nonelected inventions, there being no allowable generic or linking claim. Applicant timely traversed the restriction (election) requirement in Paper No. 12.

Claims 4, 6, 8, 9 and 24-29 are under examination in the instant office action.

Drawings

3. The figures of the instant application are presented on separate pages or in separate panels. 37 C.F.R. § 1.84(u) (1) states that when partial views of a drawing which are intended to form one complete view, whether contained on one or several sheets, must be identified by the same number followed by a capital letter. For example, the two pages of Figure 1 in the instant specification should be renumbered "Figure 1A" – "Figure 1B" rather than "Figure 1, page 1 of 2" and "Figure 1, page 2 of 2". Applicant is reminded that once the drawings are changed to meet the separate numbering requirement of 37 C.F.R. § 1.84(u) (1), the specification should be amended to change the Brief Description of the Drawings and the rest of the specification to refer to each Figure accordingly. If, for example, Figure 1 is divided into Figures 1A-1B, then the Brief Description and all the references to this figure in the specification must refer to this Figure in the same manner.

Specification

4. The disclosure is objected to because it contains an embedded hyperlink and/or other form of browser-executable code, see page 2, line 5, for example. Applicant is required to delete the embedded hyperlink and/or other form of browser-executable code. See MPEP § 608.01.

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Applicant is advised to review the entire text of the instant specification for other possible use of hyperlinks.

5. Claim 4, as amended, is not in compliance with the requirements for Sequence Identifiers (see MPEP 2422.03). The appropriate format for sequence identifiers is SEQ ID NO: X, wherein "X" is the sequence number. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Objections

6. Claims 6, 8 and 27-29 are objected to because of the following informalities: claims 6 and 8 depend from cancelled claim 5; claims 27-29 depend from claim 8. Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

7. Claims 4, 9 and 24-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is drawn to an invention with no apparent or disclosed specific and substantial credible utility. The instant application has provided a description of an isolated DNA encoding a protein and the protein encoded thereby. The instant application does not disclose a specific biological role for this protein or its significance to a particular disease, disorder or physiological process, which one would wish to manipulate for a desired clinical effect.

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It is clear from the instant application that the protein described therein is what is termed an "orphan protein" in the art. The DNA of the instant application has been isolated because of its similarity to a known DNA. There is little doubt that, after complete characterization, this DNA and encoded protein may be found to have a specific and substantial credible utility. This further characterization, however, is part of the act of invention and until it has been undertaken, Applicant's claimed invention is incomplete. The instant situation is directly analogous to that which was addressed in *Brenner v. Manson*, 148 U.S.P.Q. 689 (Sus. Ct, 1966), in which a novel compound which was structurally analogous to other compounds which were known to possess anti-cancer activity was alleged to be potentially useful as an anti-tumor agent in the absence of evidence supporting this utility. The court expressed the opinion that all chemical compounds are "useful" as it appears in 35 U.S.C. § 101, which requires that an invention must have either an immediate obvious or fully disclosed "real world" utility. The court held that:

"The basic quid pro quo contemplated by the Constitution and the Congress for granting a patent monopoly is the benefit derived by the public from an invention with substantial utility", "[u]nless and until a process is refined and developed to this point-where specific benefit exists in currently available form-there is insufficient justification for permitting an applicant to engross what may prove to be a broad field", and "a patent is not a hunting license", "[i]t is not a reward for the search, but compensation for its successful conclusion".

The instant claims are drawn to an isolated nucleic acid molecules encoding a protein of as yet undetermined function or biological significance. It is clear from the instant specification that the claimed novel nucleic acid molecules encode "human transporter peptides and proteins that are related to the sodium/calcium exchanger subfamily" (page 1, lines 11-12 of the instant specification). More specifically, "the present peptides are selected based on homology and/or

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structural relatedness to known proteins of the sodium/calcium exchanger subfamily and the expression pattern observed” (page 1, lines 19-21). Therefore, based on the structural similarities to different known proteins, it has been suggested that the proteins of the instant invention, encoded by the claimed polynucleotides, would also possess similar biological activity.

Numerous publications exist on a topic of predicting protein functions from structural similarities or homology to the known proteins. It is well described in the art that amino acid structure cannot necessarily predict the function of the protein: “Knowing the protein structure by itself is insufficient to annotate a number of functional classes and is also insufficient for annotating the specific details of protein function” (see Skolnick et al., Box 2 on page 36 and the whole paper). Moreover, “Structural similarity does not necessarily mean a common evolutionary origin and homologous sequences may evolve into different folds (according to current classification schemes) (See Bork et al., Current Opinion in structural Biology, 1998, 8, page 332, first column, second paragraph). Thus, according to the state of the art, functional characteristics of a protein cannot be unequivocally extrapolated from its structural characteristics.

In the absence of knowledge of the biological significance of these specific nucleic acid molecules of SEQ ID NO: 1 and 3, which encode a protein of SEQ ID NO: 2, there is no immediately obvious patentable use for the polynucleotides or the protein encoded thereby. According to the specification of the instant application, claimed nucleic acid molecules could be used to identify modulators of transporter gene expression, and further to use such modulators “to treat a disorder characterized by aberrant nucleic acid expression” (page 45, last paragraph of the instant specification). The instant specification fails to provide any evidence or sound scientific reasoning that would support a conclusion that the instant nucleic acid or encoded

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protein is associated with any diseases or disorder. To employ the DNA of the instant invention as “probes, primers, chemical intermediates, and in biological assays” (page 42, last paragraph) is not a “real world” utility because it would eventually relate to a protein for which no biological function is known. The instant application also fails to demonstrate use of the protein as a marker for any specific disease or condition (which would be a real world use). Because the instant specification does not teach a biological activity of the protein, which supports a practical utility, one would not reasonably believe that the administration of a modulator of “transporter nucleic acid expression in cells and tissues that express the transporter” (page 46, first paragraph) would prevent or treat a condition or disease, as implied by the specification. To employ a nucleic acid of the instant invention in any of the disclosed methods would clearly be using it as the object of further research, which has been determined by the courts to be a utility, which, alone, does not support patentability. Since the instant specification does not disclose a credible “real world” use for the claimed polynucleotides in their currently available form, then the claimed invention is incomplete and, therefore, does not meet the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 101 as being useful.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

8. Claims 4, 9 and 24-26 are also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph.

Specifically, since the claimed invention is not supported by either a clear asserted utility or a

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well established utility for the reasons set forth above, one skilled in the art clearly would not know how to use the claimed invention.

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

9. Claims 6, 8, 24 and 27-29 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.
10. Claims 6 and 8 are vague and indefinite because they depend from cancelled claim 5, therefore, the claimed subject matter cannot be clearly identified.
11. Claim 24 recites the limitation "host cell" in claim 9. There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claim. Furthermore, claim 24 recites the limitation "the peptide" in reference to "said polypeptide". There is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation within the claim.
12. Claim 24 is further vague and ambiguous because it is not clear what polypeptide is intended to be produced by the claimed process. Claim 24 depends from claim 4, which is not limited to nucleic acids encoding polypeptides, see section (d). Clarification is required.
13. Claims 27-29 are indefinite for being dependent from indefinite claims.

Conclusion

14. No claim is allowed.

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Olga N. Chernyshev whose telephone number is (703) 305-1003. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday 9 AM to 5 PM ET.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Yvonne Eyler can be reached on (703) 308-6564. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Certain papers related to this application may be submitted to Technology Center 1600 by facsimile transmission. Papers should be faxed to Technology Center 1600 via the PTO Fax center located in Crystal Mall 1 (CM1). The faxing of such papers must conform with the notices published in the Official Gazette, 1156 OG 61 (November 16, 1993) and 1157 OG 94 (December 28, 1993) (see 37 C.F.R. § 1.6(d)). NOTE: If Applicant *does* submit a paper by fax, the original signed copy should be retained by Applicant or Applicant's representative. NO DUPLICATE COPIES SHOULD BE SUBMITTED so as to avoid the processing of duplicate papers.

Official papers filed by fax should be directed to (703) 872-9306. If this number is out of service, please call the Group receptionist for an alternative number. Faxed draft or informal communications with the examiner should be directed to (703) 308-7939. Official papers should NOT be faxed to (703) 308-7939.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0196.

Olga N. Chernyshev, Ph.D. 


JOHN ULM
PRIMARY EXAMINER
GROUP 1600